



ENERGIZE YOUR SOIL

Plant Cover Crops

Maryland's 2024-2025 Cover Crop Sign-Up

SAVE THE DATE!

This year's cover crop sign-up runs **June 21 through July 17, 2024**, at soil conservation district offices state-wide. This is your opportunity to apply for attractive grants to help pay for seed, labor, and equipment costs to plant cover crops in your fields this fall.

WHY COVER CROPS?

Fall-planted cover crops are your best defense against erosion and runoff in the winter. They build healthy soil by supplying organic matter, suppressing weeds and pests, reducing compaction, and protecting fields from too much or too little rain. They even help remove carbon from the atmosphere.

APPLY IN PERSON

Please contact your local soil conservation district to apply for our grants. You will be asked for a copy of your completed *Nutrient Management Certification*. This form is included in your registration packet and can be downloaded from our website.

WHAT'S NEW

- This year, we're offering increased incentive payments to farmers who use highly valued planting practices.
- You can earn up to \$105/acre with incentives.
- Aerially seeded cover crops qualify for up to \$90/acre with incentives.

2024-2025 COVER CROP PLANTING AND PAYMENT OPTIONS

TRADITIONAL COVER CROPS PAYMENT OPTIONS	NO-TILL	CONVENTIONAL	BROADCAST WITH LIGHT, MINIMUM OR VERTICAL TILLAGE	AERIAL/ AERIAL GROUND SEEDING	BROADCAST STALK CHOP AND BROADCAST CULTIPACKER
Base payment:	\$50/acre	\$50/acre	\$50/acre	\$50/acre	\$50/acre
Plant by October 10, add:	\$25/acre	\$25/acre	\$25/acre	\$0/acre	\$0/acre
Plant between October 11 and November 5, add:	\$10/acre	\$10/acre	\$10/acre	\$0/acre	\$0/acre
Aerial seed into standing corn on or before September 10, add:	\$0/acre	\$0/acre	\$0/acre	\$10/acre	\$0/acre
Plant rye, triticale, or a multi-species cover crop, add	\$20/acre	\$20/acre	\$20/acre	\$20/acre	\$20/acre
Terminate cover crop after May 1, add:	\$10/acre	\$10/acre	\$10/acre	\$10/acre	\$10/acre
MAXIMUM PAYMENT AMOUNT:	\$105/acre	\$105/acre	\$105/acre	\$90/acre	\$80/acre
Flat rate: for cover crops incorporated into fields November 6 - November 15:	\$40/acre	\$40/acre	\$40/acre	\$0/acre	\$0/acre

PLANTING OPTIONS

- Plant cover crops after corn, soybeans, sorghum, tobacco, vegetables, hemp, or millet.
- You must sign up to plant at least 10 acres of cover crops to participate in this program.
- Total enrolled acres may not exceed acreage managed under the farm's Nutrient Management Plan.
- Direct deposit of cost-share grants is available.

SEED REQUIREMENTS

- Homegrown and purchased seed must be tested and labeled following Maryland Seed Law and Regulations.
- Seed must be free of prohibited noxious weed seeds, have a minimum germination rate of 80%, and have no more than 16 restricted noxious weeds per pound.
- Cost-share is available for seed testing.

ELIGIBLE COVER CROP SPECIES

- **Cereal Grains** Wheat/Spelt, Rye, Barley, Triticale, Oats, and Ryegrass
- **Brassicas** Forage Radish and Canola/Rape
- **Legumes** Clover, Austrian Winter Peas, and Hairy Vetch (must be planted with a cereal grain as part of a mix)

COVER CROP MIXES

Planting a cover crop mix can increase biodiversity on your farm and protect against weather extremes.

- Two-species cover crop mixes may be planted at a rate of 50% cereal grains and 50% brassicas or legumes.
- Three species mixes (50/25/25) must contain a minimum of 50% eligible cereal grains.

IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

- Plant mixes containing legumes, forage radish, canola/rape, or oats by **October 1, 2024**.
- The aerial seeding deadline is **October 10, 2024**. Some species have earlier deadlines.
- Plant cereal grains by **November 5, 2024**. Some species have earlier deadlines.

- Terminate cover crops between **March 1 and June 1, 2025**.
- The latest date cover crops may be planted is **November 15**, with termination no earlier than **May 1, 2025**. *Note: Late-planted cover crops do not qualify for a late termination incentive payment.*

FALL MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

After becoming well-established, eligible cover crops may be grazed or chopped for on-farm livestock forage. Manure may be applied in the fall following Maryland's nutrient management regulations. **Ask your soil conservation district about new guidelines for applying non-poultry manure to cover crops.**

CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENT

To receive payment, you must certify your cover crop with the local soil conservation district within one week of planting and by **November 12, 2024**. Certify late-planted cover crops by **November 22, 2024**. All follow-up documentation must be submitted to the local SCD by **December 2, 2024**, to receive payment.

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

- You must be in good standing with the Conservation Grants Program and in compliance with Maryland's nutrient management requirements.
- Additional restrictions may apply.

FIND A CONTRACTOR TO PLANT YOUR COVER CROP

Visit mda.maryland.gov/conservation for a list of contractors who can plant cover crops in your fields this fall.



Maryland
Department of Agriculture

Office of Resource Conservation

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Our Cover Crop PLUS+ option offers more perks and higher incentives for farmers who agree to a 3-year cover crop commitment. Contact your local soil conservation district for details or visit mda.maryland.gov/conservation.